

Connecting Schools in Boston and Haifa

Oranim has worked with Boston-Haifa Connection for over twenty years. This year, we are building partnerships between 22 Jewish schools in Boston and 22 schools in Haifa.



Personal Relationships

["In order for Boston-Haifa schools to be true partners, our students need to be able to see, hear, feel and laugh together. Otherwise, the relationship will not be real, and we will not learn from each other about our Jewish identity."](#)

This quote, from a teacher in the Boston-Haifa school twinning program, describes the essence of the program. Partnerships between schools are built on personal relationships. Students and educators from across the ocean learn about the "[small details of each other's lives](#)" while exploring together larger questions of Jewish identity, pluralism, and their relationship to Israel.

The Department of Jewish Peoplehood, now part of the Oranim International School, has led the professional team for the Jewish Education and Identity Committee of the Boston-Haifa Connection for ten years. This year, Oranim International School is providing educational supervision and support for twelve elementary school partnerships and ten middle and high school partnerships. The school twinning program includes: professional development, curricula development, and mutual faculty and student delegations. Jackie Levi-Atias of the International School directs the program. The Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston (CJP, Boston's Jewish Federation) provides funding for the project.

Delegation from Boston to Haifa

Last June, Oranim International School facilitated a delegation of Boston educators to Haifa. The educators met with their Haifa partners, and together they defined their vision and objectives for the partnerships and developed detailed work plans. The delegation generated energy and ideas that the educators are now beginning to put in practice. As one of the educators said at the end of the trip, "[I am bursting with excitement about the endless possibilities which lay ahead. I cannot wait to get back to the US and put this partnership in motion!](#)"

Diverse Expressions of Judaism

The trip highlighted one of the emphases of the school twinning program: exploring diverse approaches to Judaism. After a visit to Haifa's Kehillat Moriah, a Conservative synagogue, one participant said, "[I was witnessing history. There is a slowly growing renaissance of sorts where Israelis who identify as 'secular' are discovering that there are multiple ways to practice Judaism; that Judaism does not belong to the Orthodox alone. I am proud that the CJP Boston-Haifa Connection, of which I am now a part, is having something to do with it.](#)"

Professional Development

This year, as part of the Boston-Haifa Connection, Oranim International School is facilitating two professional development seminars in Haifa. One seminar is for middle school principals and is in partnership with the Haifa municipality, the Ministry of Education, and the Shalom Hartman Institute. Some of the principals are already involved in school twinning projects, and some are learning about them for the first time.

The other seminar is for early childhood educators who coordinate school partnerships. This is the second year of the seminar, and participants are looking forward to continuing to learn together. As one participant said about last year's experience, "[The seminar] made me think about my identity as a Jew and as an Israeli, and about the importance of the connection with the American Jewish community."